

Setting ourselves challenges

I find it hard to believe but I've just experienced my seventh Harrogate. It seems like only a few months ago that I was meeting so many of you for the very first time, but now it is friends of quite long standing whom I bump into each January.

This year, of course, the week took on a new form with a three day show, beginning on Tuesday morning, and the inaugural Golf Club Show joining BTME in the Harrogate International Conference Centre.

Both innovations could be deemed unqualified successes with record numbers attending the Show - 8,629, more than 10% up on last year's record total - and the feedback from the Golf Club Show exhibitors extremely positive. It must be hoped that after such a promising launch this Show will go on from strength to strength and reinforce the belief that Harrogate is the "one-stop shop" for greenkeepers and golf club officials alike.

I, like so many of you I met during the week, am already looking forward to BTME 2003 - my eighth - although to surpass the quality of what we have just experienced it will take a fair bit of preparation and imagination. Still, as Sir Edmund Hillary might have said as he stood on the foothills of Everest, what would life be like if we didn't have challenges? Between now and next January every effort will be made to ensure that your week in North Yorkshire is as rewarding, and as entertaining, as it can possibly be.

This month I must pass on my congratulations to you on providing the magazine with the strongest Letters' page since I have been Editor. In fact, calling it a Letters' page is doing it a severe injustice as it stretches to two full pages and is packed with well expressed arguments on a range of subjects.

Credit for much of this must go to Duncan McGilvary, Course Manager at Potters Bar GC, whose article, "Should we lead or should we be led" was the catalyst for a flood of correspondence stretching over the last three months.

It is a topic which obviously struck a cord with you all and, as the debate continues to develop, I'm sure the letters will keep flooding in.

Following on from the article Duncan hosted a couple of meetings at Harrogate at which many of those who had commented up until that point, as well as several other interested parties, discussed the issues raised by the piece. Feedback from those meetings will be aired in the magazine in due course.

The article also made its mark outside the green-keeping fraternity and was discussed at the EGU Masterclass at Woodhall Spa in early January, where more greenkeepers and golf officials were given the chance to air their views.

Such well considered debate, while uncovering a range of opinions, is undoubtedly healthy and does much to strengthen the view that greenkeepers should be given full rein to their voice and access to debates within their golf clubs.

Scott MacCallum
Editor

Brian's ordeal at hands of armed robbers

Brian Woodhouse, Head Greenkeeper of Chalford Golf Club, in Buckinghamshire, endured a terrifying ordeal late last year when, early one morning when he was first to arrive at the club, he was attacked, handcuffed, beaten up and asked if he wanted to die by robbers armed with a shotgun.

Speaking in his local paper, the Bucks Examiner News and Advertising, Brian, 54, said that at first he resisted but they had started hitting him around the face.

"One of the guys threatened to shoot me in the legs and asked if I wanted to die. They got the handcuffs on me and kicked me in the stomach," said Brian.

Since the attack new security measures have been put in place at the golf club and Brian has

Police took 'too long' to get to scene of gun-raid

report by Helen Osborne

MANAGERS have criticised police after it took them nearly 20 minutes to travel two miles to a golf club to tackle a violent armed raid, in Little Chalfont.

Greenkeeper Brian Woodhouse, 54, was handcuffed, beaten up, and asked: "Do you want to die?" by the would-be robbers armed with a shotgun.

The victims at Chalfont Golf Club, called three times before police officers from Amersham arrived.

"It's disgraceful," said owner of the club Mike Dunne, who chased the intruders after discovering the battered and bruised Mr Woodhouse.

Manager, of the club in Lodge Lane,

she explained.

"We received a call about the robbery at 6.54am. Nine officers were on their way to the incident within one minute of that call being made even though they were not yet officially on duty.

"Police were in the vicinity within two minutes and surrounding locations including the railway station were checked very quickly.

"An officer attended the scene itself at 7.12am, by which time we had been able to confirm that the shotgun used in the incident had not been discharged and there was

Flashback to the chilling headline in Brian's local newspaper

shifted his hours so that he arrives at the club during daylight.

"Many golf clubs are isolated so I would caution any greenkeepers

who tend to be first to arrive at the club to take care," said Brian, who has yet to recover fully from the trauma.

A second series of training courses planned by TGA

Following a successful launch last year the Turf grass Growers Association (TGA) will be holding a second series of half-day training courses at venues in the West Midlands, Yorkshire, Berkshire and Surrey between March and June.

Targeted primarily at professionals who supply, specify or install quality sports, amenity or ornamental turf surfaces, the courses are being hosted by independent turf consultant and agronomist, Robert Laycock, the appointed advisor to the TGA.

Course content has been carefully chosen to help attendees understand and achieve optimum selection, installation and after-care of cultivated turf. Specific attention will be paid to the importance of turf quality and the various methods of quality assessment, including the TGA standards for cultivated turf, independently drawn up in 1996. Robert will also look at the selection of turf for different

lawn situations together with lawn design, establishment and long-term care, including the most suitable equipment for the job.

The first TGA training course of the 2002 season takes place at Birmingham City Football Club on March 18. Further courses will be held on April 23 at a venue near Bradford, Yorkshire; on May 22 at a venue near Reading, Berks; and on June 18 at a venue near Reigate, Surrey.

To register for or receive further details on the TGA conference or the TGA's 2002 training courses, contact TGA headquarters, telephone 01728 723672 or e-mail: david.clarke@turfgrass.co.uk



GTC article gets Chairman of Green thinking right 'On Course'

An article in the new issue of the GTC newsletter "On Course" has set at least one Chairman of Green thinking.

Management consultant Frank Newberry had argued that better management skills were allowing Course Managers, Head Greenkeepers and their Deputies to cope with the ever-increasing demands put upon them and Brian Jackson, Chairman of Green at Bishop Auckland GC, read the piece and immediately contacted David Golding, the GTC's Education Director, to say how much he enjoyed the article.

"My time in industry has taught me that training is very worthwhile. Anything which motivates people and inspires self-confidence has to be good," said Brian.

"Frank's article rang bells with me and reinforced in my mind that training is the way forward for the industry."

David retires from industry after 45 years

David Smith, a Director of Atherton and Ellis, has retired after a career which spanned 45 years having joined the company in 1956 as Secretary

From the start of his career David was involved in sales, and attended exhibitions to keep abreast of industry developments. The main event in those days was the Institute of Groundsman Exhibition at Motpur Park, now SALTEX held at Windsor. He holds what must be a record of never having missed an exhibition in 45 years.



David pictured with Clive Osgood and Stephen Bernhard at last month's BTME